THE MULTIPLE BARRIER CONCEPT

Proposal for an investigate for a one-hour film

When markets are good, Saskatchewan supplies 30% of the world's demand for uranium. Since Chernobyl and the end of the Cold War, the market is down. However, there is one area in the nuclear industry where the world market is ready to boom: spent fuel disposal. It is ready to boom because the nuclear industry is doomed if it cannot dispose of its high-level waste, and yet nobody wants it in ~~his~~ backyard. The answer may lie in Saskatchewan.

In 1991, the Saskatchewan government ~~of Roy Romanov~~ commissioned a management consultant firm called Peat, Marwick, Stevenson and Kellogg to look into it. Here are some extracts from their report:

> With the world's largest uranium industry, Saskatchewan would be well positioned to develop a used fuel repository....Fuel leasing arrangements could be considered where uranium would be provided and the used fuel taken back for ultimate disposal....it could increase Saskatchewan uranium sales by up to 10%....China has offered to take used fuel for ultimate disposal in the Gobi desert on a commercial basis....(but) no other country has offered a fuel-leasing service....The major utilities in Japan, Korea, USA, Germany, Belgium and Sweden would be very supportive of Canada's initiative. That support could well translate into business....Atomic Energy of Canada (AECL) estimates total direct costs (of opening a storage facility in the granite of the Precambrian Shield) at $9 to 14.5 billion, direct employment of 1100 during construction and 600 during operation....Public hearings on AECL's proposal will likely occur in late 1992 or 1993, by which time Saskatchewan would have to declare its candidacy.

The federal Department of the Environment did not get these hearings going until this year. They will start in Toronto on March 11. Saskatchewan's case will be strengthened by the emergence of the first community in the world to express a positive interest in the use of its territory as a potential site. The Meadow Lake Tribal Council, representing nine Cree, Dene and Métis bands in northern Saskatchewan, started a feasibility study in 1993, with the help of the AECL.

All the leading players in the nuclear debate will be at these hearings, which will continue intermittently over the next two months in Toronto, Pickering, Thunder Bay, Sudbury and Chalk River. AECL will be advocating the "multiple barrier concept" it has been testing in the Precambrian Shield in Manitoba over the past 15 years. This will be opposed by environmentalists and native activists who view the nuclear waste issue as inspiring "the next great social movement, on the scale of the civil-rights and anti-war movements of this century" (Rufina Laws, the Mescalero Apache woman who organized resistance to the use of her reserve in New

Mexico as a temporary nuclear waste depository). Gunther Wippel, a teacher visiting from Germany, will be reporting on the event he witnessed in Lower Saxony last year, when local communities over a 30-km stretch of highway used a combination of legal action and sabotage to stall the advance of a tractor-trailer which was trying to deliver a 30-ton cask of nuclear waste to a temporary storage facility in Gorleben. He thinks it indicates what Canada is in for if it accepts the offer from the Meadow Lake Tribal Council.

The Environmental Assessment Panel conducting the public hearings is expected to provide legitimacy for AECL to proceed with the selection and testing of suitable sites later this year. An aroused public could make even this exploratory work difficult, as shown when AECL's attempt to test disposal sites in northern Ontario in 1980 was stopped by hostile local communities. Its subsequent success in establishing a research centre in nuclear-free Manitoba was achieved only on the condition laid down by the government of that province that no nuclear waste be imported for testing.

Research for a film on this explosive subject should begin with ~~my~~ attendance at the hearings in Toronto the week of March 11, and should include a week in Saskatchewan after my trip to Winnipeg on March 18. A script could be prepared for May 1, with a view to production beginning in Saskatchewan in September, when the Panel will be holding its hearings there, and ending with the undertaking of site testing in that province. Consideration will be given to shooting sequences in Germany and China, both of which countries who are expected to send observers to the Toronto hearings.

Martin Duckworth
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Budget

3 weeks for director at $1500	$4500
Travel to Toronto, Regina and Saskatoon	1500
Living expenses for 15 days at $100	1500
1 week for producer	1500
Office expenses	500
Total	$9500